



## FACT SHEET

**We bring relentless optimism, innovation and imagination to the biggest challenge facing education today: the opportunity gap.**

Big Thought believes the opportunity gap will only be solved by bringing the right opportunities to the kids who need them most. By connecting like-minded organizations, we customize programs to meet the unique needs of each community we serve. By igniting the imagination and engaging the whole child through accessible educational programs that reinforce core academic curricula, develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and address social and emotional needs, Big Thought is closing the gap, one child at a time.

### MISSION

To make imagination a part of everyday learning.

### VISION

We envision communities where every learner is immersed every day in opportunities to imagine, create and succeed.

### OUR CREED

We're all taught imagination is something extra: extracurricular, extraneous, only for the extraordinary. What we now know is that the imagination is fundamental teach and every one of us: the source of all grit and creativity, the core that powers our mind, body and spirit. Within every one of us, no matter where we come from or where we appear to be headed, there is an imagination that's waiting to fire up, waiting to learn, to energize and explore, just waiting to chart the course of a life forever, for the better. That's our BIG THOUGHT.

**FOUNDED**  
In 1987

### HOW WE WORK

We are experts at igniting young imaginations (especially the not-yet-sparked). Here's how we do it:

- **Connect** – We partner with individuals and like-minded organizations to meet kids where they are. Our partnerships bring opportunities directly into neighborhoods and schools for maximum access.
- **Ignite** – We work together to design programs that ignite the imagination and engage the whole child.
- **Learn** – We take a step back and scrutinize our programs (relentlessly). We measure, we learn, we adapt, we change curriculum. We document our successes and failures to endlessly optimize what we do.
- **Share** – We know what works (and what doesn't). We share insights and methods across programs, across cities, across governments. We invite meaningful dialogues that span the globe to further our one audacious goal: to spark the imagination of each and every child.

### FAST FACTS

- Big Thought is one of the nation's leading nonprofit organizations focused on building partnerships that close the opportunity gap through creative out of school programs.
- At the core of Big Thought is imagination, which infuses all educational experiences with opportunities to innovate. Imagination fuels an interest in science, math, literacy, business and all activities that engage the mind.
- Big Thought is the driving force behind Thriving Minds, the country's only citywide education reform initiative with creative learning at its core.
- Through our partnerships, Big Thought serves more than 100,000 children, families and teachers, and delivers more than one million hours of individual creative instruction and programming each year.

### OUR PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Creative Solutions  
Dallas City of Learning  
Library Live!

DaVerse Lounge and DaVerse Works  
Learning Partners  
Thriving Minds After-School and Summer Camp

## AN INVESTMENT WORTH MAKING

- 85 percent of those attending Big Thought's Thriving Minds After-School program, and 97% of those attending the Thriving Minds Summer Camp are economically disadvantaged
- Big Thought was selected as part of a national research study conducted by the RAND Corporation on summer learning loss. Near term findings show that students engaged in the Thriving Minds Summer Camp program showed statistically significant gains in math.
- Students participating in our Creative Solutions program show significant improvement in social skills and a decrease in problem behaviors.
- All programs are assessed against our 6 Dimensions of Quality evaluation model with 71% of classroom evaluations ranked as proficient or advanced
- Highly creative youth are successful—they have more consistent school attendance, higher academic achievement and may be primed for leadership and community involvement.
- Parents who engage their kids in high-quality after-school programs are less likely to miss work (Afterschool Alliance).

### WHO WE SERVE

Students, families, teachers and communities throughout Dallas  
Big Thought targets those who have no access—from a standpoint of time, money or opportunity—to participate in arts or other creative activities

### WHEN WE SERVE

During school, after-school, in the evenings, on the weekends, in the summer

### WHERE WE SERVE

In public schools, neighborhoods, libraries, community and recreation centers, churches, juvenile centers, museums, universities and other locations throughout Dallas. Big Thought also consults with cities across the globe about how they can start similar programmatic models in their communities.

### LEADERSHIP/STAFF

Gigi Antoni, President/CEO of Big Thought, is considered one of the nation's most creative and effective educational leaders. She is widely regarded as a national expert on immersing creative learning systemically into public education.

Bill Albers, partner at MPKA, LLC. and owner/chairman of the board for the American Excelsior Co. is chair of the 71-member Big Thought board.

### HISTORY

More than twenty-five years ago, Edith O'Donnell and Mitch Jericho knew in their hearts that the arts had the power to help children learn. They pooled their resources and launched the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Young Audiences here in Dallas.

The organization has since grown to serve children, teachers and parents in more ways than its founders ever imagined. In 2004, the name was changed to Big Thought to reflect its broadened scope of vision and ideas. Today, having expanded beyond the traditional in-school programs, Big Thought coordinates partnerships to develop programs that close the opportunity gap and spark the imagination. Through its work, Big Thought provides learning opportunities that have been proven to help students become more imaginative, adaptable and productive adults, resulting in stronger communities and a more capable future workforce.

### MAJOR DONORS

Big Thought receives funding from some of our nation's most generous donors, both private and public. Recent major gifts include contributions from Fossil, Best Buy, Bank of America, Target, Texas Instruments, Microsoft, TACA, The United Way and the City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs. Foundation contributions include The Wallace Foundation, Harold Simmons Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, M.R. and Evelyn Hudson Foundation, Hoblitzelle Foundation, Meadows Foundation and The Eugene McDermott Foundation. Big Thought also receives contributions from many individual donors.

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